

The Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme

Summary

LINK welcomes the draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP) but recommends that it is developed further and includes:

- A long-term Vision outlining how Scotland will negotiate a path into a new climate in a sustainable way, and Principles to be followed by those implementing the SAP;
- Development of policies contained in the SAP, and more solid and appropriate actions on the ground at an early stage;
- Full implementation of all existing environmental legislation, and commitment to 'work with nature' in order to build a healthy and resilient natural environment and ensure continuation of ecosystem services needed in a future Scotland;
- Effective public communication and demonstration projects on the ground to increase understanding and ensure appropriate, wide-scale adoption of adaptation actions;

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee Debate on Tuesday 14th January 2014, will consider Scottish Government's draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme¹ (SAP). Scottish Environment LINK provided evidence to the RACCE committee about this document on 30th October and this briefing sets out LINK's main concerns about the draft Programme.

Scotland needs to plan now for the consequences and impacts of our changing climate. We are already observing climate change and its impacts. Scotland must reduce GHG emissions but also adapt how we run our economy, our society and how we look after our environment. Adaptation is the term used to describe our responses to a changing climate and its impacts. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way. Despite the publication of the draft SAP, climate adaptation remains a low priority within Government - **building the resilience of Scotland's environment to climate change should be a priority at a time when our natural resource base needs to be valued as an important asset.**

Scottish Adaptation Programme background

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009² requires Government to lay before the Scottish Parliament '*programmes for adaptation to climate change*'. The Scottish Government has developed measures based on risks identified for Scotland in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2012. The CCRA is however limited and does not adequately cover some impacts, such as sea-level rise or extreme weather events.

LINK's work on climate adaptation

LINK's Climate Adaptation Taskforce has worked for a number of years to influence the development of the SAP – with a particular concern for biodiversity and the natural environment (which underpins all sectors). In 2012, we produced a position statement outlining 5 Principles for Adapting to a Changing Climate³. It also included suggested

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/2469>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/5/chapter/1>

³ http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/LINK5_ClimateAdaptPrinciples.pdf

guidelines for helping the natural environment to adapt and guidelines for ensuring adaptation is sustainable and coordinated across all sectors. LINK also held a workshop to develop recommendations for the SAP⁴.

LINK's main points of concern with the draft SAP

LINK welcomes the draft SAP, but wants to see the Scottish Government improve it by fully addressing the following points:

- **Vision and Principles:** The SAP must include a long-term Vision to outline how we will negotiate a path into a new climate, for example by defining 'sustainable adaptation'. It must also include Principles which will guide sustainable adaptation action and implementation of the SAP.
- **Urgency of action:** Climate change impacts are being felt now in Scotland, particularly in the natural environment. We believe the SAP must do more to show the urgency needed and put in place solid measures to tackle climate risks at an early stage.
- **Ecosystem approach:** We welcome that the SAP recognises that the natural environment provides benefits to Scotland in terms of resilience to climate change. However, we believe an ecosystem approach of 'working with nature' should be central to the SAP to; avoid maladaptation, ensure appropriate scale of action, and provide a sustainable flow of benefits from ecosystems, such as flood attenuation
- **Greater clarity:** We welcome the long list of policies in the SAP, however, too many are vague, lack sufficient detail, and fail to outline the actions to be taken. This makes it difficult to confidently assess whether the SAP Objectives will be met. We recommend effort to further develop the policies ahead of SAP publication.
- **Implementing existing legislation:** Whilst the SAP does include existing policies to improve the natural environment, LINK wants to see the SAP emphasise the need to fully implement all existing environmental legislation. Improving our environment will increase the resilience of the natural environment, society and economy to climate change impact.
- **Demonstrating action:** We welcome efforts to embed adaptation across Government but it is vital that adaptation is embedded throughout wider society too. Demonstration projects and an effective communication strategy must be included in the SAP to allow wider society to understand the need for effective adaptation and ensure appropriate adaptation action.

This briefing was produced by LINK's Climate Adaptation Task Force and is specifically supported by the following members:

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- Soil Association Scotland
- Plantlife Scotland
- Woodland Trust Scotland

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⁴ <http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/LINKAdaptWkshopReport12.pdf>